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RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 4131
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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4746
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0611
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0470
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0628
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4337
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2629
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0650
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7489
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1286
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2600
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC 0196
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC 0045

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

EUR/ACE FOR RICK STODDARD AND DEAN FISCHER
ASTANA FOR ALMATY/USAID

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [PINR](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: INSTITUTE FOR NEW DEMOCRACIES FINALLY
RECEIVES REGISTRATION

REF: TASHKENT 303

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

11. (SBU) Summary: The Ministry of Justice chose the symbolic date of July 4 to announce the formal registration of the USAID-supported Institute for New Democracies (IND) in Uzbekistan. Although IND has successfully functioned in a difficult environment for the past two years without registration, the conferring of official status is a major symbolic gesture by the Government of Uzbekistan that could pave the way for additional American NGO involvement in the civil society sphere. IND will now be able to officially organize and attend events without the help of "local sponsors," although it will also be subject to the stringent banking requirements that affect all registered entities in Uzbekistan. Along with the Government of Uzbekistan's strongest contingent of Fourth of July guests in recent memory, the registration of IND suggests the door is open to accelerate the pace of reengagement. End summary.

IND Finally Registered

12. (SBU) Mjusa Sever, Director of the IND office in Tashkent, received formal registration documents at a July 4 meeting with Akram Nematov, the Ministry of Justice's Head of International Relations and Acting Head of the Registration Department. Nematov remarked that IND is the first U.S. organization to be formally registered in several years, and he specifically noted the symbolism of doing so on the Fourth of July as a means of expressing congratulations to the U.S. on its Independence Day. The registration document has an unlimited time period and authorizes IND "to assist in implementing democratic reforms through education, policy research, and practical assistance to government institutions and civil society." Nematov also told Sever that other organizations such as the American Bar Association - Rule of Law Initiative (ABA-ROLI) are "welcome to apply" for registration as well. (Bio note: The 32-year old Nematov is the son of First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ilkhom

Nematov. Sever said his recently augmented portfolio was a positive sign, as was the appointment of the English-speaking Gulchehra Obilova as a deputy in the Registration Department, who previously worked for Freedom House and attended graduate school on a U.S. exchange program. End bio note.)

What Will be Different?

13. (SBU) IND, with USAID funding assistance, has successfully operated in Uzbekistan for the past two years without formal registration, and recently co-sponsored a significant international conference on law enforcement and human rights (reftel). Now that it is officially registered, IND will have the ability to officially conduct events on its own without "local sponsors," which are generally quasi-governmental organizations or think tanks. IND will also now enjoy the freedom to meet with Government of Uzbekistan officials and other entities. As Sever told poloff, "people are now allowed to talk to us." IND will conduct its first official function on July 10-11 when it hosts a workshop to discuss the new habeas corpus law, which will be followed by additional USAID-supported trainings in the provinces. Sever envisions that IND can also make strong contributions in religious freedom and in penitentiary reform.

14. (SBU) There are still some bureaucratic issues for IND to work through. The organization must apply for its official stamp from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and there is a separate process (also involving the Ministry of Justice) to

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officially register the organization's logo. In the meantime, IND will refrain from using its logo, especially since this was previously used as a basis for accusing non-governmental organizations of breaking rules in Uzbekistan. As a registered entity, IND is now prohibited from cash operations and must begin making all transactions through one of the two state-authorized banks -- the National Bank of Uzbekistan or Asaka Bank. (Note: Stringent banking requirements affect all entities in Uzbekistan, but previous experience demonstrates that foreign non-governmental organizations are particularly susceptible to official scrutiny based on banking practices. We have heard from NGOs recently that banking is still an issue but is improving somewhat. End note.)

Comment:

15. (SBU) Sever had indicated for several months that accreditation for IND would be forthcoming, and the Government of Uzbekistan may have held off on finalizing the paperwork until assessing how bilateral relations were shaping up from its perspective. It's no coincidence that the certificate was presented to the American NGO on the Fourth of July, just hours after a 50-strong contingent of Uzbek officials turned up for our Fourth of July event. Officials on hand included First Deputy Prime Minister Azimov, Foreign Minister Norov, Minister of Foreign Economic Relations Ganiev, and the Speakers of both chambers of parliament -- one of our longtime local staff said it was the largest turnout he'd ever seen. The signals are clear that the Government of Uzbekistan wants better relations, and it is even willing to tolerate civil society-focused non-governmental organizations -- if they stay on the marked trail.

NORLAND